SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
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bradley717@gmail.com

Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

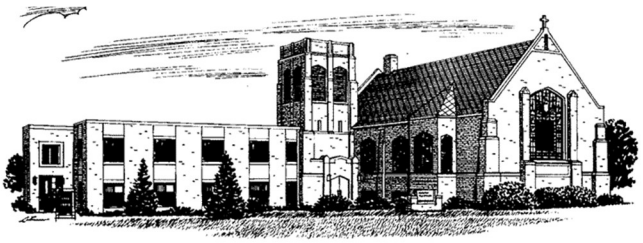
Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring (beginning Sept 11):
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40 Learning Hour for Ages 2-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer of 2023 (beginning June 4):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*



PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR DECEMBER 2022

Last Sunday, the confirmation students heard "Olena's Story" and watched a short video clip as we learned a bit about Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and the ministry they offer. Following a brief teaching time, we, with the help of a couple of other congregational members, then made cover 40 cards to send to individuals and families in detention centers through LIRS "Hope for the Holidays." Some were in English and some in Spanish, thanks to our knowledgeable students! A basic message was that they were neither forgotten nor alone. It is a message of welcome.

We are a people of hope. During this Advent season, we are surrounded by opportunities to live into that hope - Sunday mornings, Wednesday evenings, Monday prayer - as well as others, culminating in our Christmas Eve and Day services. I invite you to join me as we prepare for the birth of the one who brings hope in the ever-unfolding story of God's amazing grace.

Wishing you a blessed Advent season of joy and peace in the midst of listening, waiting, and expectation.

-Pastor Joan

DID YOU KNOW???

Did you know that the vast majority of people in immigration detention seek protection from violence and persecution? Which means they should be treated as refugees? ...that as of September 9, 2022, there were over 24,000 people being held in ICE detention facilities? ...that women and girls continue to be one of the most vulnerable demographics in the entire U.S. immigration system? What do you know about refugees? Take the quiz - https://www.lirs.org/quiz-refugees. Learn more at LIRS.org.

WELCOME

We welcomed
Hazel Frances Kohs
daughter of Scott & Kate Kohs, to the family of Christ on November 6, through the act of Holy Baptism. Sponsors are Paige Kohs and Lance Kohs. Congratulations, Kohs Family!

General Information

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

Watch weekly emails and door signage for any change in protocol. As of printing, masks are encouraged for those who feel so inclined but not required. Nursery workers and communion assistants will wear masks.

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Ron Bolson is at Woodland Terrace in Bridgman;
Kathleen & Phillip Preston are at Caretel in St. Joseph;
Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

12/2 Victor Coar
12/2 Jason Crockett
12/4 Phil Standden
12/5 Alexander Breyen
12/6 Rachael Johnson
12/7 Adam Maly
12/8 Lee Carter
12/9 Piper Gray-Roll
12/9 Brooke Hoffman
12/9 Janet Taylor
12/11 Robert Deaton
12/12 Cynthia Brown
12/12 Edward Brunner
12/13 Eric Standen
12/13 Deb Standen
12/14 Finnegan Gray-Roll
12/16 Grace Hicks
12/16 Charles Pater
12/16 Caden Zwar
12/18 Heather Pudell
12/21 K.T. Alexander
12/27 Oliver Fortenbacher
12/29 Paxton Zwar
12/30 Madison Dipert
12/31 Kristen Harper

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

12/18 Dennis & Colleen Lundgren
12/18 Heather & Steve Pudell
12/26 Brian & Marybeth Culverhouse
12/29 Edmund & Claudia Staude
12/30 Judy & Mark Wedde

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

SYMPATHY

We offer our condolenses to June Embree upon the death of her husband, **H. Gene** on November 5th. The memorial service was held at Saron on November 12th.

We also offer our condelenses to Don & Carol Hafer upon the death of Carol's mother, **Bernice "Bunny" Koski** on November 11th. The funeral was held at Saron on November 18th.

No kidding, your help is needed . . . b-a-a-a-dly!

Vulnerable communities in Africa are facing a "triple C" crisis as Conflict, COVID, and Climate change are causing widespread threats to lives and livelihoods. Hunger is rising with many countries and communities facing food insecurity. If these conditions continue, some countries and communities will move into the final phase of food insecurity: famine.

Strategies for dealing with the effects of "triple C" are focused on introducing regenerative agriculture practices – such as diversification of livestock and micro-dosing with manure – that improve soil health, increase productivity, build climate resilience, and reduce reliance on expensive synthetic fertilizers. Per Farm Africa (farmafrica.org), "Growing maize and legumes and **keeping goats, pigs, poultry, and bees** are all resilience mechanisms, which ensure that if one source of income fails, people have another to fall back on."

How can you help?

Last year during Advent, the people of Saron donated 21 goats, 17 pigs, 17 broods of 10 chicks each, and 24 honeybee colonies during our ELCA Good Gifts focus. Let's do it again, only more!

This year, from the beginning of Advent (November 27th) through Epiphany (January 6th), you will have the opportunity to make donations for an animal Christmas tree ornament that will allow the ELCA to purchase and deliver the animal(s) of your choice to where it (they) will do the most good. We are again focusing on just four animal ornaments, but not just for simplicity. These four are best for the environment and will provide the most help to struggling families:

Goat – $50
Goats can go where other animals can't, surviving in some of the world's most challenging terrain. Goat's milk provides nutrition for children and goats are quick to reproduce. The manure is also great for micro-dosing practices.

Piglet – $30
This little piggy couldn't be a bigger lifesaver. This gift provides natural fertilizer that helps crops grow tall and strong.

Honeybees – $20
Support farmers and healthy honeybee colonies with this buzz-worthy gift. Honeybees provide honey to eat, beeswax that allows a farmer to start a small business, and a boost to crop growth by pollinating plants everywhere they go.

Chicks – $10
Help a family spread their wings. Eggs not only provide an ongoing supply of protein-rich meals – they can also help start a small business and generate a steady source of income.

Look for an order form with instructions in the bulletin each week during Advent.

ELCA Good Gifts is your opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to you and the people you love. Saron Outreach

FORTIFY & fly

Did you notice the solar lights being tested along the building by our alley parking spaces? This type of safety feature will protect both people and property. Win-win! The worship enhancement team is also busy, exploring the feasibility and cost of installing a ramp up into the chancel area and is presently requesting estimates. They're also investigating potential new flooring options. We'll continue passing on details as they become available.

At the end of October 2022, we had collected an additional $170 for a total of $377,266 towards our pledge total of $367,205. If you still have a pledge to fulfill or simply wish to continue giving, we will gratefully accept your gift. Thank you for being with us on this journey!

Worship

PRAYER GROUP

Join us Mondays at 11am for a time of quiet reflection and prayer, which includes lifting up the requests offered on Sundays at worship or via other means. We meet in the sanctuary.

ALTAR FLOWERS

You can sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by calling the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks can be payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Thank you for beautifying our worship space! Please take them home after the 2nd service to enjoy. **Simply return the vase to Saron.**

We are welcoming new members on December 18. Are you also interested in becoming a member of Saron or learning more about the faith from the Lutheran perspective? If so, contact Pastor Joan.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Zoom fellowship at 11am as long as there is interest. The link remains the same each week and is sent out on Tuesdays

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that occasionally need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex. There are also clipboards with coloring pages, as well as children's bulletins, to assist kids as they transition into participating in worship. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages in our congregation and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families negotiating life with children. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

December 4: 2nd Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

December 11: 3rd Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

December 18: 4th Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

December 25: Christmas Day
Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20

YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group (grades 6-12) joined with other members of Saron to rake leaves at a house in St. Joseph on October 29. Grant, Mia and Alaina spent hours being a blessing to a family in need. It was much appreciated!

We next meet on **December 11th for a Christmas party at Saron after the late service.** Food, fun and… The Nativity Escape Room!!! Plan to join us to find out exactly what The Nativity Escape Room is all about. We can't wait to see you all.

Contact Merrily at merrilyannsmith@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We offer a time of age-appropriate study between the two services (9:40am-10:30am):

- **Grades 5 and Under** meet in the Sunday school classroom.
- **Confirmation Students** (Grades 6-8) meet in the confirmation classroom.
- **Adult Forum** meets in the upstairs lounge.

NEW WEDNESDAY EVENING FORUM & FELLOWSHIP

We are breaking for Advent, returning in January!

Forum & Fellowship meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 7pm.
Ed Staude facilitates this group.
All are welcome!

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

We are breaking for Advent, returning in January!

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We are breaking for Advent, returning in January!

We will continue to work through *Acts: Catching up with the Spirit* by Matt Skinner in January. In this study, led by Pastor Joan, "*Skinner explores six key themes that illustrate the ways in which reading Acts is capable of igniting our imagination about the character of the Christian message, the work of God's people (the church), and the challenges of living faithfully in a complex and changing world*.*

We meet Thursday mornings in the lounge from 9:30am-11am. Contact Pastor Joan if you have any questions. This class is open to all interested in attending. You are welcome to join anytime, for one session or many.

*from the website

BOOK CLUB

Please join us Sunday, December 4th at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge. "Still Life" by Sarah Winman is our book. (There are several books with the title "Still Life" so make sure the author is "Winman".) It's a bighearted, captivating story of people brought together by love, war, art, flood and the ghost of E.M. Forster. A portrait of people who come together to make a family and of love in all its forms.

We don't meet during January. February 5th our choice will be "Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World and Why Things Are Better Than You Think" by Hans Rosling. You have plenty of time to read this fascinating book and get ready for a good discussion. Zoom information will be sent out closer to the December 4th meeting to all who have expressed interest in book group. To be included, please contact Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com. We welcome everyone who loves to read and then share thoughts about the book with others. A good discussion is guaranteed.

"*A book read by a thousand different people is a thousand different books.*"
- Southern Adirondack Library Sys.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

Deborah Circle will **not** meet in December. January 11, 2023 is the date for the Christmas Party at the home of Linda Pater. More information to follow.

SARON CHURCH WOMEN

Saron Church Women will be having a bake sale in the church narthex on Sunday, December 11 after both services.

All of the proceeds will go to the Saron Mentor Family Fund. Please bring a baked item or items and, hopefully, make a purchase. It is extremely helpful if you label your treat donation and note any potential allergens. This would be a good time to make Christmas treats. Also, cakes and pies tend to sell faster when cut into plated serving pieces.

We will continue to collect monetary donations on the following Sunday, December 18. Thank you in advance for your support. It is very much appreciated. Contributions to the Mentor Family Fund are accepted throughout the year.

Saron Church Women has been supporting people in need through the Mentor Family Fund for 15+ years, helping with holiday dinners, Christmas gifts, utility bills, medicines, gas and car issues, and much more. With winter and the holidays coming up, we expect more requests.

If you have questions or know of anyone in need of help, please contact Linda Pater at 269/369-1178.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.
Thank you for your generous offerings!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy.
- Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On October 27, Saron members & friends, Sally Schmuhl, Linda Pater, Jim Mamore, Toshi Stokes, Kathie Bradley & Pastor Joan were very busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing 70 lunches. Guests enjoyed a ham dinner which included ham, potato salad, coleslaw, fruit, pickles, bread, & homemade cookies. Thanks to our cookie baker Freida Williams.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church): 231/670-0328 or dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Support

The Support Committee will be meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

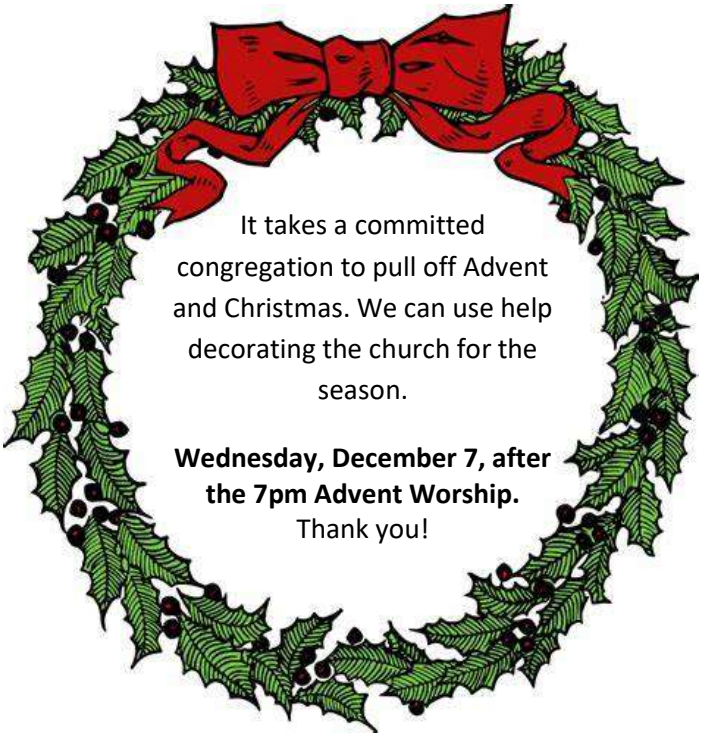
We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

FALL CLEANUP

Thank you to those who showed up on November 26 to transition our property into Winter after we had to cancel the first date due to snow (what!?!). We got it done right before the City of St Joseph ended curbside pickup. Also, thanks to the group that volunteered to rake leaves for two houses in our community, one of which was Ruth Ball's yard. She enjoyed the company and the help. Nice work, Saron!

Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar for **January 29, 2023**! We will join together to hear council and committee reports, approve the 2023 spending plan, elect new council members, and more! Watch for details in the January Newsletter and future emails.


It takes a committed congregation to pull off Advent and Christmas. We can use help decorating the church for the season.
Wednesday, December 7, after the 7pm Advent Worship.
Thank you!

GRATITUDE

"*May God bless those who put in a lot of work to help my son & grandson out* (by raking leaves). *What a HUGE blessing this was to them. Thank you doesn't seem enough. I am including a small gift of thanks. I am asking God to multiply it for you."*

-Deb Fields

"Dear Saron Ladies,

Thank you for your service and kindness to my family and friends.

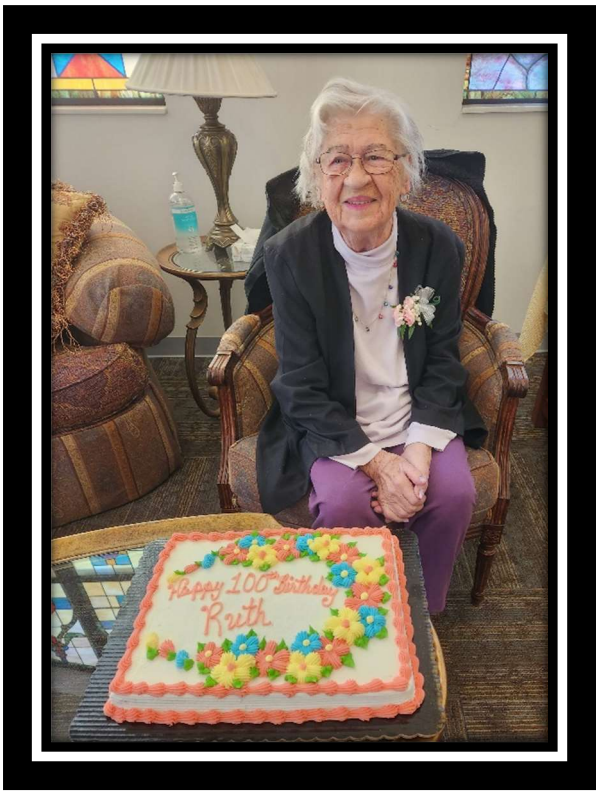
Sincerely,
June Embree"

"*On behalf of Bunny Koski's family, we would like to thank all of the Saron family who sent cards and messages, attended and assisted with the funeral ceremony, or brought food for or served at the luncheon following the service.*

Saron did become Mom's spiritual home once we moved her to Michigan. She enjoyed all whom she met and interacted with both at Saron and at Woodland Terrace.

We especially thank Pastor Joan, who served Mom faithfully and truly came to know her - as evidenced by her beautiful message at the service. We also thank Irma Gorman, who played Mom's beloved Grieg so beautifully. Thank you all."

-Carol and Don Hafer



"Dear Saron members,

Thank you so much for the wonderful birthday party. I've never had anything like that before.

Everyone was so wonderful & welcoming and I really enjoyed talking to all of you. It felt like I was home. I'm grateful to be honored like that and thank you for the cards and best wishes."

-Ruth Ball

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

DECEMBER 2022 NEWSLETTER

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH 2022 ADVENT SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAYS, NOVEMBER 30, DECEMBER 7, 14 & 21

"Holy Darkness: Service of Word and Prayer for Advent"
Advent Soup Suppers at 6pm with Worship at 7pm
On-location & via Zoom

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

Youth Christmas Service at 11am
"The ABC's of Christmas"
On-location & via Zoom

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

Luke's Christmas Story at the Outdoor Nativity at 5pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship at 7pm & 10pm
Both worship services will be on-location & via Zoom

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day Worship at 10am
On-location & via Zoom

SUNDAY, JANUARY 1

New Year's Day Worship at 10am
On-location & via Zoom

DECEMBER 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**2**	**3**
4 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**5** 11am Prayer Group	**6**	**7** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6pm Advent Supper 7pm Advent Worship then Decorate Church	**8** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**9**	**10**
11 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am **Youth Christmas Service** and Worship with Zoom Option	**12** 11am Prayer Group	**13** 8pm Support Meeting	**14** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6pm Advent Supper 7pm Advent Worship	**15** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**16**	**17**
18 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**19** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting	**20**	**21** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 6pm Advent Supper 7pm Advent Worship	**22** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**23**	**24** 5pm Reading at the Nativity (Outdoor) 7pm Worship with Zoom Option 10pm Worship with Zoom Option
25 **MERRY CHRISTMAS!** 10am Worship with Zoom Option **No Learning Hour**	**26** 11am Prayer Group	**27**	**28** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**29** 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**30**	**31** **HAPPY NEW YEAR'S EVE!**